IN THE CLAIMS:

This listing of the claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application. Please amend the claims as follows:

1–18 (Canceled)

19. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for at least one of loading and unloading multi-piece goods units to and from a transport compartment in a loading and unloading direction, the apparatus comprising:
at least one conveying unit being at least partly inserted into the transport compartment and simultaneously conveying a plurality of multi-piece goods units therein;
having:
a plurality of beam guide members fixed to an overhead support structure;
a unitary traveling support beam operatively connected to the beam guide members for reciprocating travel into and out of the transport compartment;
at least two gripping units operatively mounted to the unitary support beam for movement therewith and disposed in spaced succession therealong for movement into and out of the transport compartment, each gripping unit including a laterally oriented crossbeam and two fixed length elongate legs mounted to said crossbeam and being movable with respect to one another, the multi-piece goods units being clamped between the two fixed length elongate legs in general centered alignment with respect to the support beam when the gripping unit engages the multi-piece goods units;
at least two lifting units mounted to said crossbeam for lifting the multi-piece goods units in a generally vertical direction perpendicular to the

loading and unloading direction for movement of the multi-piece goods units into and out of the transport compartment.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said conveying unit is installed fixedly in a loading region; and is movable upon supporting rollers in the loading region.

21. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein:
at least one of said gripping units has pick-up region; and
said guide and support unit is disposed above said pick-up region.

22. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 21, wherein:
said conveying unit is installed fixedly in a loading region of a building; and
said guide and support unit is to be mounted on an overhead portion of the building.

23. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein at least one of said gripping units is mounted displaceably on said guide and support unit.

24. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said guide and support unit has: an end pointing in a direction of the transport compartment; and a supporting element disposed at least at said end.

25. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said gripping units move with at least two degrees of freedom.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said gripping units move freely with regard to at least one degree of freedom during at least one of a loading operation and an unloading operation.

28. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein said conveying unit has supporting rollers for supporting at least one multi-piece goods unit.

29. (Original) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein transport compartment is a commercial motor vehicle.

30-31 (Canceled)

32. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for at least one of loading and unloading multi-piece goods units to and from a transport compartment, the apparatus comprising:
a plurality of beam guide members fixed to an overhead support structure;
a unitary traveling support beam operatively connected to the beam guide members and extending in a substantially horizontal direction for reciprocating travel into and out of the transport compartment for depositing the multi-piece goods units in the transport compartment or retrieving multi-piece goods units from the transport compartment;
a crossbeam extending in a direction substantially transverse to the support beam, mounted operatively thereto and having a first end and a second end disposed opposite the first end;
a <u>fixed length elongate</u> first leg connected to the first end of the crossbeam and extending downwardly in a substantially vertical direction from the crossbeam;

a fixed length elongate second leg connected to the second end of the crossbeam and extending downwardly in a substantially vertical direction from the crossbeam, the first and second legs having respective length dimensions sufficient to extend beyond individual pieces of the multi-piece goods units and being movable toward one another to clamp the multi-piece goods units and away from one another to release the multi-piece goods units; and

a hydraulic cylinder connecting the crossbeam to the support beam, the cylinder being movable between a retracted condition, in which the crossbeam is moved toward the support beam to lift the multi-piece goods units, and an extended condition, in which the crossbeam is moved away from the support beam to lower the multi-piece goods units.

33. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the crossbeam is connected to the support beam for translational movement with respect to the support beam to center the crossbeam and the multi-piece goods units with respect to the transport container.

34. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the crossbeam is connected to the support beam for pivotal movement with respect to the support beam for alignment of said crossbeam and said multi-piece goods units with respect to the transport container.

35. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the crossbeam includes a hydraulic driver for moving the first and second legs with respect to one another, the hydraulic driver being movable between a clamped condition, in which the legs are moved toward one another to engage the sides of the goods units with a force-locking connection, and a

unclamped condition, in which the legs are moved away from one another to disengage the goods units.

36. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, wherein the legs do not extend below the goods units and the goods units are free of any support between the goods units and a floor surface.

37. (Cancelled)

38. (Previously presented) The apparatus according to claim 32, further comprising a frame having rollers and supporting the support beam.

39. (Currently Amended) A method for moving multi-piece goods units between a loading region and a transport compartment, the method comprising the steps of:
providing a conveying unit including a plurality of beam guide members fixed to an overhead support structure and a unitary traveling support beam operatively connected to the beam guide members and extending in a substantially horizontal direction for reciprocating travel into and out of the transport compartment for depositing the multi-piece goods units in the transport compartment or retrieving multi-piece goods units from the transport compartment, at least one gripping unit having a crossbeam and two fixed length elongate legs extending therefrom, said legs being movable with respect to one another to engage the multi-piece goods units, and at least one lifting unit mounted to said crossbeam and connecting the at least one gripping unit to the support beam;
positioning the gripping unit adjacent the multi-piece goods units in at least one of the loading region and the transport compartment;

engaging the multi-piece goods units with the gripping unit by moving the legs toward one another to clamp the multi-piece goods units and apply opposing forces on opposite sides of the multi-piece goods units;

lifting the multi-piece goods units with the lifting unit;

moving the support beam, thereby transporting the gripping unit and the multi-piece goods unit to the other of the loading region and the transport compartment;

lowering the multi-piece goods units back on the base with the lifting unit; and

disengaging the multi-piece goods units from the gripping unit by moving the legs away from one another to unclamp the multi-piece goods units.